

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Missouri Preschool Project: Parent Report

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Introduction

A questionnaire distributed to the parents of the 390 assessed pre-kindergartners collected information on the various kinds of experiences children had prior to kindergarten. This included their activities with other relatives, as well as their participation in early childhood programs and other community activities.

Two hundred thirty-six parents completed questionnaires (with only one parent responding per family), equating to a response rate of 60.5%. Respondents identified their relationship with the assessed pre-kindergarten child. The 235 respondents included 225 mothers (95.7%), 11 fathers (4.7%), two grandparents with legal guardianship, and one stepfather (0.4%). The term “parents” will be used throughout this report to refer to all of those who responded. Note that some parents omitted items, accounting for slight differences in sample sizes for various items on the survey.

Early Childhood Experiences

Primary Early Childhood Care and Education Experiences

Two hundred thirty-five parents documented the age of their child’s first regular early childhood experiences with others outside the immediate family. On average, the children were 22 months old at the time of the first early childhood experience. This included 24 children (10.2%) with newborn early childhood experiences whose ages were coded as “0 months.” The upper limit on the age range for the child’s first early childhood experience with others was 5 years 2 months.

Two hundred thirty-two parents stated how many different child care arrangements they had used. Fifty-three parents (22.8%) had used only one program, while 64 (27.6%) had used two different programs, and 56 (24.1%) had used three. Nineteen parents (8.2%) used four different providers, and 11 (4.7%) had used five or more. Twenty-nine parents (12.5%) had not used any regular child care arrangements. From a list of three types of early childhood care, parents checked those that their pre-kindergarten child had experienced, which were categorized as center-based, in someone else’s home, or in a relative’s home. Table 1 details the number of experiences by category.

Table 1.**Number of Early Childhood Experiences by Type (n=232)**

Type of Program	Zero % (n)	One % (n)	Two % (n)	Three % (n)	Four % (n)	Five % (n)	≥Six % (n)
Center-based programs	27.2% (63)	47.0% (109)	22.0% (51)	2.2% (5)	0.9% (2)	0.9% (2)	0.0% (0)
Home-based programs with non-relatives	49.1% (114)	31.9% (74)	13.8% (32)	3.5% (8)	1.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)
Home-based programs with relatives	73.3% (170)	22.4% (52)	2.6% (6)	0.9% (2)	0.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)

The ages of children at the beginning of their current child care experiences ranged from birth to 5 years 11 months with a mean age of 3 years 5 months. Time spent with child care providers ranged from 0 to 55 hours per week, with a mean of 28.5 hours in programs.

Supplementary Care

Fifty-one of 234 parents (21.8%) also depended on supplementary care when their children were not with their regular child care provider, 48 of whom provided more information about the nature of that supplemental child care. Two of 48 responding parents (4.2%) relied on older siblings to watch children when they were not in regular programs, while 25 (52.1%) relied on other relatives and 5 (10.4%) relied on non-relatives in their child's home. Fourteen of the 48 parents (29.2%) used home-based programs, and 6 (12.5%) used center-based programs. Time spent in supplemental child care ranged from 0 to 80 hours per week, with a mean of 19.5 hours. Costs for this kind of care ranged from \$0.00 to \$70.00 per week, with a mean cost of \$21.15 per week or \$1.08 per hour. When excluding free child care, the mean cost was \$39.35 per week or \$1.73 per hour.

Locating Child Care

Parents identified the methods they used to locate child care. A friend or relative referred eighty-four of 234 parents (35.9%) to their child care program. Sixty-five parents (27.8%) found programs on their own, while 17 (7.3%) used newspapers, the yellow pages, or other advertisements to learn about programs in their area. Twenty-one parents (9.0%) were referred by a public agency, 14 (6.0%) were referred by an employer, 3 (1.3%) were referred by a speech therapist, and 8 (3.4%) were recommended by a community agency, including a resource and referral agency. Nine parents (3.8%) identified Parents as Teachers as a referral source, with 14 (6.0%) using programs in their school district. Some parents had previous relationships with their child care providers. Nine parents (3.8%) worked for the district or program their child was in, 8 (3.4%) said their provider is a friend, 5 (2.1%) left children in the care of relatives, and 3 (1.3%) had used the program with an older child. Eighteen parents (7.7%) marked the "other" category.

In addition, parents of children enrolled in Missouri Preschool Project programs described the issues they encountered in locating child care by addressing 10 questions concerning cost, availability, choice, and convenience of child care. The options for responses were *yes*, *no*, or *somewhat*. The majority of responses reflected successful resolution of their challenges in finding child care. In fact, with regard to cost, 88 of 232 parents (37.9%) stated that they would be willing to pay more for their child care, and 97 parents (41.8%) agreed somewhat with that statement. However, in 50 of 234 instances (21.4%), parents reported that their financial situation compromised to at least some degree the quality of child care they were able to get. Eighty-three of 232 (35.8%) stated that they had had at least some difficulty finding the child care they wanted. Seventy of 233 parents (30.0%) felt that they did not have more than one choice for a provider when they selected their current program. One hundred seventy-three of 231 parents (74.9%) believed their provider had values similar to their own, and 51 (22.1%) believed that to some degree. Only five of 233 parents (2.1%) thought their child care was too far from home, and 9 (3.9%) thought that was somewhat true. This information is presented in greater detail in Table 2.

Table 2.

Factors Affecting Child Care Choices

Child Care Issues	No % (n)	Somewhat % (n)	Yes % (n)
Cost of Child Care			
I have trouble affording child care. (n=234)	56.8% (133)	26.5% (62)	16.7% (39)
The cost of child care has prevented me from getting the kind of care I want. (n=234)	78.6% (184)	12.4% (29)	9.0% (21)
I would be willing to pay more than I do for the care that I have. (n=232)	20.3% (47)	41.8% (97)	37.9% (88)
Availability of Child Care			
In my neighborhood, child care is hard to find. (n=231)	43.7% (101)	29.4% (68)	26.8% (62)
I've had difficulty finding the child care I want. (n=232)	64.2% (149)	24.6% (57)	11.2% (26)
Choice in Child Care			
In choosing child care, I've felt I needed to take whatever I could get. (n=232)	78.0% (181)	17.7% (41)	4.3% (10)
When I made this arrangement, I had more than one option. (n=233)	30.0% (70)	18.5% (43)	51.5% (120)
There are good choices for child care where I live. (n=232)	17.7% (41)	37.5% (87)	44.8% (104)

Child Care Issues	No % (n)	Somewhat % (n)	Yes % (n)
I found a provider who shares my values. (n=231)	3.0% (7)	22.1% (51)	74.9% (173)
Convenience of Child Care			
My child care is too far from home. (n=233)	94.0% (219)	3.9% (9)	2.1% (5)
Getting to child care is a long commute for us. (n=233)	88.8% (207)	6.4% (15)	4.7% (11)

Reasons for Choosing Early Childhood Programs

Parents rated twenty-two factors on the degree to which they influenced choices about child care providers. Responses were on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 *not at all important*, 3 *somewhat important*, and 5 *very important*. The reputation of the provider was the most important factor in program selection and received a mean score of 4.78, followed by programs with enriching environments (4.77), and teachers who are warm and nurturing (4.75). Whether a program accepts infants was the least important reason for choosing a program, with a mean score of 2.02. Table 3 shows parent responses in more detail.

Table 3.

Reasons for Choosing Early Childhood Programs

Reasons	Not at All Important % (n)	Little Importance % (n)	Somewhat Important % (n)	Important % (n)	Very Important % (n)	Mean ^a (n)
Number of children per provider	1.3% (3)	0.4% (1)	14.5% (34)	26.9% (63)	56.8% (133)	4.38 (234)
Warm and loving teaching style	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.8% (9)	17.4% (41)	78.7% (185)	4.75 (235)
Flexible or convenient hours	2.6% (6)	5.6% (13)	18.5% (43)	26.6% (62)	46.8% (109)	4.09 (233)
Training or credentials of the providers	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	9.0% (21)	24.8% (58)	65.8% (154)	4.56 (234)
Rate of provider turnover	2.1% (5)	3.0% (7)	15.9% (37)	30.5% (71)	48.5% (113)	4.20 (233)
Physical facilities and equipment for play and learning	0.0% (0)	0.9% (2)	8.1% (19)	32.3% (76)	58.7% (138)	4.49 (235)
^a Scale: 1 = Not at All Important, 2 = Not Very Important, 3 = Somewhat Important, 4 = Important, 5 = Very Important						

Reasons	Not at All Important % (n)	Little Importance % (n)	Somewhat Important % (n)	Important % (n)	Very Important % (n)	Mean ^a (n)
Provider/program has similar values to yours	0.0% (0)	0.9% (2)	8.2% (19)	36.5% (85)	54.5% (127)	4.45 (233)
Convenient location	0.4% (1)	6.8% (16)	26.8% (63)	29.8% (70)	36.2% (85)	3.94 (235)
Cost	3.0% (7)	7.3% (17)	29.2% (68)	22.3% (52)	38.2% (89)	3.85 (233)
Provider is someone you know and trust	0.4% (1)	2.1% (5)	8.2% (19)	21.0% (49)	68.2% (159)	4.55 (233)
Race/ethnicity or language of provider matches that of you or your child	28.1% (66)	19.6% (46)	23.4% (55)	11.9% (28)	16.6% (39)	2.68 (235)
Discipline and guidance styles are consistent with your own	0.0% (0)	2.6% (6)	13.2% (31)	38.7% (91)	45.5% (107)	4.27 (235)
Stimulating or enriching activities provided	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	2.1% (5)	17.9% (42)	79.6% (187)	4.77 (235)
Emphasis on academics, e.g. math and reading skills	0.0% (0)	3.4% (8)	11.5% (27)	30.6% (72)	54.5% (128)	4.36 (235)
Emphasis on self expression	0.0% (0)	0.9% (2)	10.8% (25)	34.5% (80)	53.9% (125)	4.41 (232)
Child care subsidy payments accepted	48.2% (109)	11.9% (27)	11.9% (27)	9.3% (21)	18.6% (42)	2.38 (226)
Program has a reputation for good care	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	0.9% (2)	19.0% (44)	79.7% (185)	4.78 (232)
Program recommended by family member or friend	12.1% (28)	8.6% (20)	25.0% (58)	23.3% (54)	31.0% (72)	3.53 (232)
Program enrolls children with special needs	21.9% (51)	9.0% (21)	22.7% (53)	23.6% (55)	22.7% (53)	3.16 (233)
Already had another child enrolled in the program	56.9% (123)	9.3% (20)	11.6% (25)	9.3% (20)	13.0% (28)	2.12 (216)
Program accepts infants	62.7% (138)	6.4% (14)	10.0% (22)	7.7% (17)	13.2% (29)	2.02 (220)
Type of program (e.g. center-based, home-based, relatives)	10.0% (23)	4.8% (11)	22.6% (52)	28.7% (66)	33.9% (78)	3.72 (230)
^a Scale: 1 = Not at All Important, 2 = Not Very Important, 3 = Somewhat Important, 4 = Important, 5 = Very Important						

Program Costs for Parents

Of the 234 responding parents, 115 enrolled their child for 35 or more hours per week, 113 of whom reported the tuition amounts they paid. For this group, the number of hours children were enrolled weekly ranged from 35 to 55, with a mean of 40.7 hours. Weekly payments for program costs by these families ranged from \$0.00 to \$153.00, for a mean of \$54.68 per week. This equated to \$1.34 per hour for the children enrolled full-time. This includes 14 families (12.4%) paying no child care program costs. When limiting the analysis to the other 99 families, the child care rates are \$62.42 per week or \$1.53 per hour.

Altogether, 119 families reported fewer than 35 child care hours per week, with their children enrolled a mean of 16.5 hours per week. For the 116 responding parents of children enrolled part-time who also provided cost information, tuition averaged \$18.61 per week, with a range from \$0.00 to \$148.00 in payments. This resulted in a rate of \$1.13 per hour for part-time child care. Included in this rate are 44 families (37.9%) who reportedly did not pay any child care program costs. The part-time child care rates if these families are excluded from the computations are \$29.98 per week or \$1.69 per hour.

Parents of 24 full-time enrollees (20.9%) and 23 part-time enrollees (19.3%) reported that they received some outside assistance with child care costs. Forty-seven of the 235 parents (20.0%) indicated that another person or agency outside the household helped pay for the child's tuition, including 38 who provided information about the source of that assistance. Of these 38 respondents, 7 (18.4%) used child support payments, 1 (2.6%) used employer assistance, and 1 (2.6%) used a scholarship to help pay tuition. One responding parent (2.6%) had friends or relatives who helped with child care costs. Five parents (13.2%) used other methods to supplement costs, including the following: state programs, TANF, Title I grants, and public school programs. Twenty-three of the 38 parents (60.5%) relied on government subsidies to help with payments. Of those receiving government subsidies, 11 (47.8%) had done so for less than a year, 6 (26.1%) for one to two years, and 6 (26.1%) for three years or more.

Parental Expectations of Child Care Programs

Some items addressing parental expectations of child care programs were included in the questionnaire. Parents were asked to what degree centers were responsible for teaching children cooperation, letters and numbers, self-confidence, and communication skills. Responses were provided on a 5-point scale, with 1 *not at all responsible*, 3 *somewhat responsible*, and 5 *very responsible*. Generally parents felt that programs should be responsible for teaching children all of these skills to at least some degree. Table 4 shows parent responses in more detail.

Table 4.**Parental Expectations of Child Care Teaching**

Parental Expectations	Not at All Responsible % (n)	Not Very Responsible % (n)	Somewhat Responsible % (n)	Responsible % (n)	Very Responsible % (n)
Teaching children how to get along with others (n=236)	0.4% (1)	0.8% (2)	26.7% (63)	32.2% (76)	39.8% (94)
Teaching letters or counting (n=236)	1.7% (4)	5.1% (12)	25.0% (59)	29.2% (69)	39.0% (92)
Teaching children self-confidence (n=236)	1.3% (3)	5.9% (14)	33.9% (80)	30.9% (73)	28.2% (66)
Teaching children to communicate their needs, wants, and thoughts (n=236)	0.4% (1)	4.7% (11)	28.8% (68)	32.2% (76)	33.9% (80)

Characteristics of the Missouri Preschool Project Programs

Parents whose children attended Missouri Preschool Project classrooms rated 28 different features of the program on a scale of 1 to 5, with the following labels: 1 (*almost never*), 3 (*sometimes*), and 5 (*almost always*). Some items were indicators of negative features, and they were reverse-coded. All items received mean scores of 3.00 or higher, and five items had means of 4.75 or higher. Child safety received the highest rating with a mean of 4.85, followed by the respectful treatment of children (4.80), child familiarity with their environment (4.79), quality of experience for children (4.77), and acceptable television access (4.76). The reverse-coded features generally had lower scores, indicating that while parents felt good about the positive characteristics of programs, some did have worries about the negative characteristics. Roughly 15% of the respondents identified at least some concern with each of several disciplinary issues, i.e., children being out of control, harsh discipline, or the provider's impatience with their child. Table 5 presents parent responses in more detail.

Table 5.**Characteristics of Child Care Programs**

Characteristics	Almost Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Sometimes % (n)	Frequently % (n)	Almost Always % (n)	Mean (n)
My child is safe with this provider. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	14.5% (34)	85.0% (199)	4.85 (234)
My child is treated with respect. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.1% (5)	15.4% (36)	82.5% (193)	4.80 (234)
^a Scale: 1=Almost Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Almost Always						
^b Scale: 1=Almost Always, 2 = Frequently, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Rarely, 5 = Almost Never						

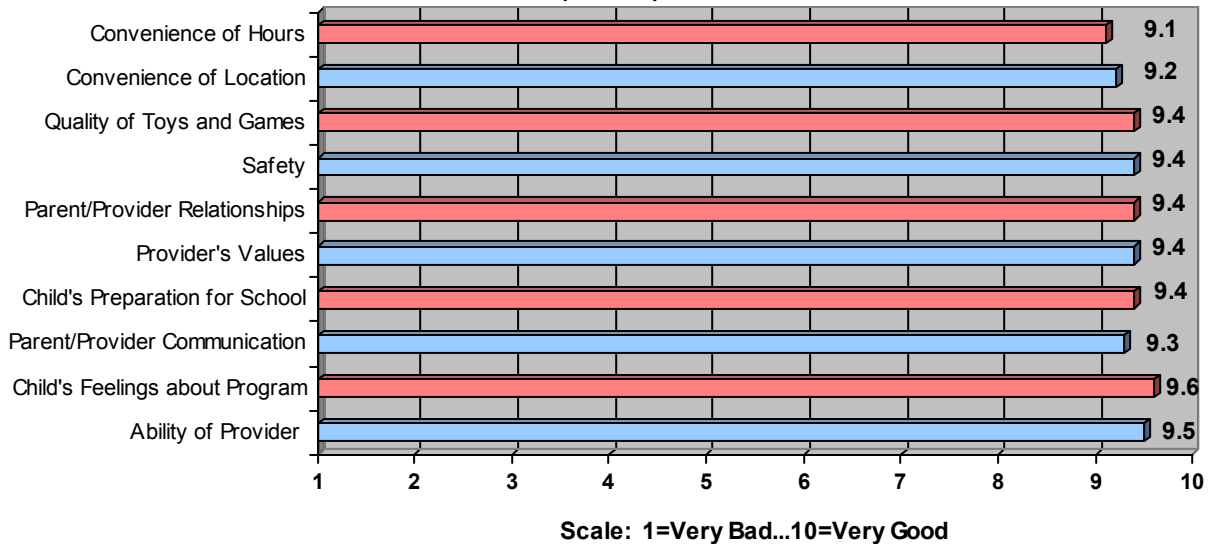
Characteristics	Almost Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Sometimes % (n)	Frequently % (n)	Almost Always % (n)	Mean (n)
My child is in a familiar place with people she knows. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	3.0% (7)	13.7% (32)	82.9% (194)	4.79 (234)
This has been a good experience for my child. ^a	0.4% (1)	0.4% (1)	3.0% (7)	13.7% (32)	82.4% (192)	4.77 (233)
My child has stability in her/his child care relationships. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	4.7% (11)	13.8% (32)	81.0% (188)	4.75 (232)
It's a healthy place for my child. ^a	0.4% (1)	0.4% (1)	3.0% (7)	17.1% (40)	79.1% (185)	4.74 (234)
My provider is happy to see my child. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (10)	19.4% (45)	76.3% (177)	4.72 (232)
My child feels safe and secure in care. ^a	1.3% (3)	0.4% (1)	1.7% (4)	18.5% (43)	78.0% (181)	4.72 (232)
The provider is warm and affectionate. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.7% (11)	19.2% (45)	76.1% (178)	4.71 (234)
If I had to do it over, I would choose this care again. ^a	1.7% (4)	1.3% (3)	3.4% (8)	11.1% (26)	82.5% (193)	4.71 (234)
My provider shows she/he knows a lot about children and their needs. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	6.0% (14)	20.6% (48)	73.0% (170)	4.66 (233)
The care I have is just what my child needs. ^a	0.4% (1)	0.4% (1)	6.9% (16)	18.5% (43)	73.8% (172)	4.65 (233)
My provider is supportive of me as a parent. ^a	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	7.7% (18)	20.2% (47)	72.1% (168)	4.64 (233)
Dangerous things are kept out of reach. ^a	5.6% (13)	0.9% (2)	0.4% (1)	10.7% (25)	82.5% (193)	4.64 (234)
It's an interesting place for my child. ^a	0.4% (1)	0.4% (1)	6.4% (15)	20.2% (47)	72.5% (169)	4.64 (233)
There are a lot of creative activities going on. ^a	0.0% (0)	1.7% (4)	6.5% (15)	19.0% (44)	72.8% (169)	4.63 (232)
My provider and I share information. ^a	0.4% (1)	0.9% (2)	6.5% (15)	27.7% (64)	64.5% (149)	4.55 (231)
^a Scale: 1=Almost Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Almost Always						
^b Scale: 1=Almost Always, 2 = Frequently, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Rarely, 5 = Almost Never						

Characteristics	Almost Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Sometimes % (n)	Frequently % (n)	Almost Always % (n)	Mean (n)
My provider is open to new information and learning. ^a	0.9% (2)	0.4% (1)	6.9% (16)	27.5% (64)	64.4% (150)	4.54 (233)
My child gets a lot of individual attention. ^a	0.9% (2)	1.7% (4)	15.8% (37)	31.2% (73)	50.4% (118)	4.29 (234)
The children watch too much T.V. ^b	85.9% (201)	6.0% (14)	6.4% (15)	1.3% (3)	0.4% (1)	4.76 (234)
There has been too much turnover in my child's providers. ^b	70.3% (163)	11.6% (27)	9.1% (21)	5.6% (13)	3.4% (8)	4.40 (232)
There are too many children being cared for at the same time. ^b	65.8% (154)	11.1% (23)	12.4% (29)	7.7% (18)	3.0% (7)	4.29 (231)
My child dislikes the provider. ^b	88.0% (205)	4.3% (10)	1.7% (4)	1.7% (4)	4.3% (10)	3.70 (233)
I worry about bad things happening to my child in care. ^b	78.2% (183)	7.3% (17)	6.8% (16)	3.0% (7)	4.7% (11)	3.51 (234)
The conditions are unsanitary/unclean. ^b	89.3% (208)	3.4% (8)	1.3% (3)	2.6% (6)	3.4% (8)	3.46 (233)
The children seem out of control. ^b	68.2% (159)	15.0% (35)	12.9% (30)	2.1% (5)	1.7% (4)	3.45 (233)
My provider has difficulty with discipline matters and is sometimes harsh. ^b	67.5% (158)	17.9% (42)	6.8% (16)	3.8% (9)	3.8% (9)	3.41 (234)
My provider gets impatient with my child. ^b	70.8% (165)	13.7% (32)	8.2% (19)	3.9% (9)	3.4% (8)	3.29 (233)
^a Scale: 1=Almost Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Almost Always						
^b Scale: 1=Almost Always, 2 = Frequently, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Rarely, 5 = Almost Never						

Satisfaction with Missouri Preschool Project Program

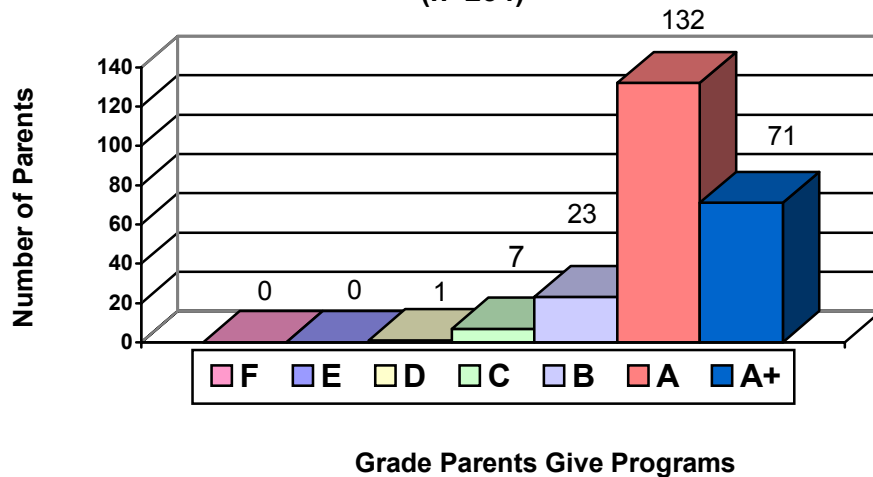
Parents rated a number of aspects of their child's program on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 (*really bad*) and 10 (*really good*). All features received mean scores above 9.0, indicating parents' high regard for the programs. Figure 1 displays the mean scores for these program features.

**Figure 1. Parent Ratings of Missouri Preschool Project Programs
(n~234)**



Parents also graded the overall quality of the early childhood program using a report card kind of scale from A+ to F [A+ (*perfect*), A (*excellent*), B (*good*), C (*fair*), D (*poor*), E (*bad*), and F (*awful*)]. Seventy-one of 234 parents (30.3%) gave programs a perfect score of A+, 132 (56.4%) gave programs an A, and 23 (9.8%) gave their program a B grade. Only 8 parents gave grades lower than a B, with 7 parents (3.0%) giving their program a C, and 1 (0.4%) giving a D. These overall scores are presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Parent Ratings of Missouri Preschool Project Programs
(n=234)**



Parent/Child Interactions

The questionnaire also asked parents to provide information about their involvement with their child. This information described parent/child interaction at home. Findings are discussed in this section of the report.

Parents reported how often in the past week someone in their family engaged in each of ten activities with the assessed child. A four-point scale allowed parents to select from the following choices: 0, 1-2, 3-6, and 7 or more times. Results are presented in Table 6. Over 75% of the parents acknowledged doing these activities at least three times in the past week with their child: listening to songs or music, playing with toys or games indoors, reading a book, taking their children along on errands, and exercising or playing sports or games outside. More than 50% of the respondents also indicated at least three incidences of each of the following activities with their child: learning letters words or numbers, completing household chores, and storytelling.

Table 6.

Activities at Home during the Past Week

Activity	Incidence in the Past Week % (n)			
	0	1-2	3-6	7+
Songs or music (n=234)	0.9% (2)	18.4% (43)	43.2% (101)	37.6% (88)
Letters, words, or numbers (n=234)	2.6% (6)	22.6% (53)	49.1% (115)	25.6% (60)
Running errands (n=234)	1.7% (4)	22.2% (52)	47.9% (112)	28.2% (66)
Exercise, sports, or outdoor games (n=235)	1.7% (4)	22.6% (53)	52.3% (123)	23.4% (55)
Household chores (n=235)	2.1% (5)	25.5% (60)	48.1% (113)	24.3% (57)
Storytelling (n=235)	6.0% (14)	37.0% (87)	43.8% (103)	13.2% (31)
Arts or crafts (n=233)	14.6% (34)	51.1% (119)	27.0% (63)	7.0% (17)
Reading other materials (n=235)	19.1% (45)	56.6% (133)	20.0% (47)	4.3% (10)
Reading a book (n=234)	0.4% (1)	21.8% (51)	50.4% (118)	27.4% (64)
Toys or games indoors (n=235)	0.4% (1)	20.0% (47)	44.3% (104)	35.3% (83)

Regarding reading material and habits, parents stated how many children's books they owned. Responses ranged from over 10 to 2,000 books.

Child Medical Care

Parents responded to questions regarding their child's state of health and medical care. Parents rated their child's health, in general, using a scale of 1 (*poor*), 2 (*fair*), 3 (*good*), 4 (*very good*), and 5 (*excellent*). Almost all of the 234 parents considered their pre-kindergarten children to be healthy, with 124 (53.0%) rating the child's health as excellent, 93 (39.7%) rating it as very good, and 16 (6.8%) rating it as good.

Parents provided information about their child's health care, with 230 of 234 (98.3%) reporting that their child has a regular health care provider. Regarding medical insurance, 225 of 233 parents (96.6%) indicated that their child has insurance coverage. From a list of six types of health care, parents checked those that their child receives. Table 7 presents these items and the responses given by parents. The vast majority of parents (greater than 90.0%) stated that their child receives each of these types of health care: immunizations, office visits when sick, and emergency care. The children of over eighty percent of parents received dental visits and regular well-child visits. The main exception was eye care visits; 91 of 234 parents (38.9%) stated that their child does receive eye care, while 143 (61.1%) stated that their child does not.

Table 7.

Types of Health Care

Type of Child Health Care	Percentage of Children Reportedly Receiving the Service % (n)
Immunizations/shots (n=234)	99.1% (232)
Office visits when sick (n=234)	99.1% (232)
Regular checkups/well-child visits (n=234)	81.6% (191)
Dental visits (n=234)	81.6% (191)
Eye care visits (n=234)	38.9% (91)
Emergency care when needed (n=234)	93.2% (218)

Family Information

Members of the Household

Twenty-three of 235 responding parents (9.8%) stated that their pre-kindergartner lives in a single-parent home; 154 (65.5%) stated that two adults reside in the household (including the respondent), while 55 (23.4%) stated that three adults reside there. Three households (1.3%) had more than three adults. This equates to a mean of two adults per household.

Regarding the number of children in the household, parents reported a median of one other child in the household (mean of 1.5), in addition to the assessed child. While 42 of the 232 parents (18.1%) reported no additional children, 95 (40.9%) had one other child, 61 (26.3%) had two other children, 25 (10.8%) had three other children, and nine (3.9%) had 4 to 12 other children living in the household with the pre-kindergartner.

Thirty-six of 235 parents (15.3%) reported that the assessed child had developmental delays or special needs. Twenty-two of the 36 parents of children with special needs (61.1%) used early intervention and special education programs.

Two hundred thirty-two parents identified the number of children under the age of six for whom they pay child care fees. Fifty-seven parents (24.6%) indicated they did not pay fees for any children younger than six, 117 (50.4%) paid for one child, 50 (21.6%) paid for two children, and eight parents (3.4%) paid for three. Weekly child care expenses for all children under six ranged from \$0.00 to \$368.00, with a median of \$50.00 and a mean of \$59.50.

Employment Information

Employment Status. Parents described their employment status. Of 234 respondents, 191 (81.6%) indicated that they are employed, with 43 (18.4%) indicating that they are unemployed. One hundred twenty-four of 176 employed parents (70.5%) reported working 40 or more hours per week, constituting full-time employment. Forty parents (22.7%) reported working from 20 to 39 hours a week, and the remaining 12 parents (7.0%) reported working from 3 to 19 hours a week.

Work Schedule. Respondents answered nine questions about their work schedule and its impact on child care using this 5-point scale: 1 (*almost never*), 2 (*seldom*), 3 (*sometimes*), 4 (*often*), and 5 (*almost always*). In 149 of 185 instances (80.5%), parents stated that they often or almost always work regular day shifts. In contrast, 31 of 155 parents (20.0%) often or almost always work evenings, 99 (63.9%) did so seldom or almost never, and 25 (16.1%) did so sometimes. One hundred thirty-five of 168 parents (80.4%) seldom or almost never work changing shifts. Few parents found their work schedules to be sources of stress for themselves and their child. One hundred twenty-four of 180 parents (68.9%) seldom or almost never felt anxiety related to their work schedule, and 40 (22.2%) felt this way sometimes. Flexible work schedules were common among respondents. One hundred forty-three of 188 parents (76.1%) felt their schedules often or almost always allowed them to handle family needs. One hundred twelve of

153 parents (73.2%) thought their employer was often or almost always flexible with their schedule. Fifty-nine of 153 parents (38.6%) often or almost always relied on flexible schedules, 63 (41.2%) seldom or never did so.

Most parents had some help with child-rearing; 136 of 182 parents often or almost always had someone to share responsibilities with, while only 35 (25.5%) felt that they were often or almost always parenting alone. Detailed information about parent work schedules can be found in Table 8.

Table 8.

Flexibility in Parent Work Schedules

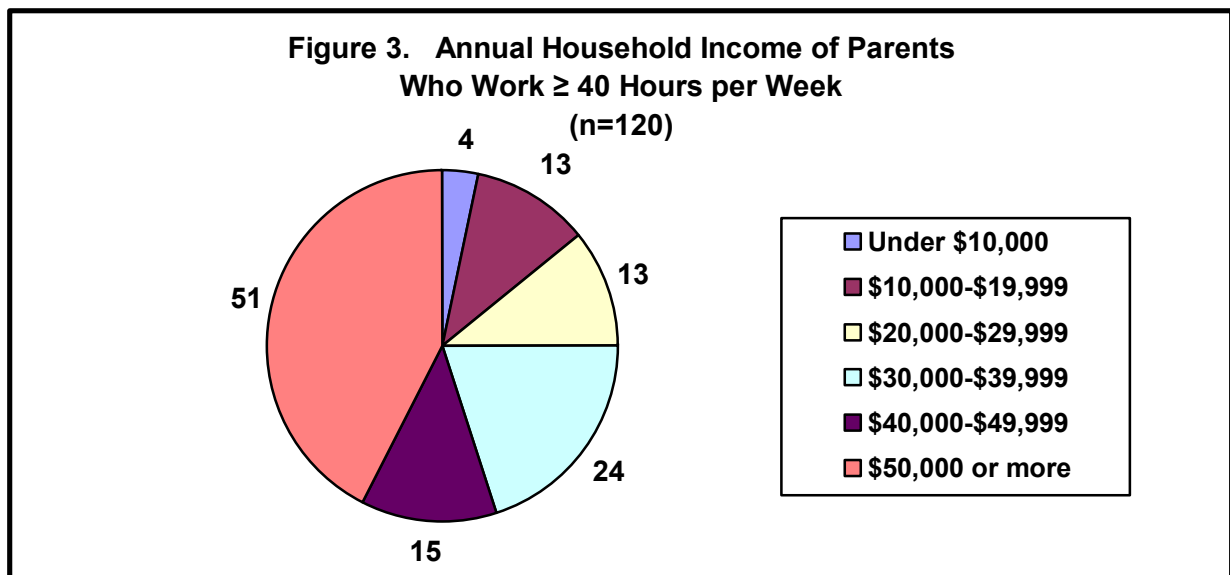
Characteristics of Parent Work Schedules	Almost Never % (n)	Seldom % (n)	Sometimes % (n)	Often % (n)	Almost Always % (n)	Mean ^a (n)
I work a regular day shift.	8.6% (16)	3.2% (6)	7.6% (14)	5.4% (10)	75.1% (139)	4.35 (185)
I work a regular evening or weekend shift.	52.9% (82)	11.0% (17)	16.1% (25)	7.7% (12)	12.3% (19)	2.15 (155)
My work schedule keeps changing.	67.3% (113)	13.1% (22)	7.7% (13)	4.2% (7)	7.7% (13)	1.72 (168)
My schedule and shift cause extra stress for me and my child.	56.1% (101)	12.8% (23)	22.2% (40)	5.6% (10)	3.3% (6)	1.87 (180)
I have enough flexibility to handle family needs.	2.7% (5)	2.7% (5)	18.6% (35)	20.7% (39)	55.3% (104)	4.23 (188)
My provider is willing to work with me about my schedule.	5.9% (9)	4.6% (7)	16.3% (25)	17.0% (26)	56.2% (86)	4.13 (153)
I rely on my provider to be flexible about my hours.	24.8% (38)	16.3% (25)	20.3% (31)	15.0% (23)	23.5% (36)	2.96 (153)
I'm on my own in raising a child.	67.2% (92)	2.9% (4)	4.4% (6)	7.3% (10)	18.2% (25)	2.07 (137)
^a Scale: 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Almost Always						

Impact of Work Schedule. Parents described the impact of their employment situation on their child care choices by selecting *yes*, *no*, or *somewhat* as a response. Few parents found their evening or weekend work schedule limited their child care choices. Only 12 of 188 parents (6.4%) reported that night or evening work restricted child care options, while 18 parents (9.6%) reported it to be somewhat limiting and 158 parents (84.0%) reported no scheduling conflicts.

Most parents did not commute long distances to their places of employment. One hundred forty-four of 188 parents (76.6%) did not consider their drives to work to be lengthy, 26 parents (13.8%) considered them to be somewhat long, and 18 parents (9.6%) considered them to be lengthy.

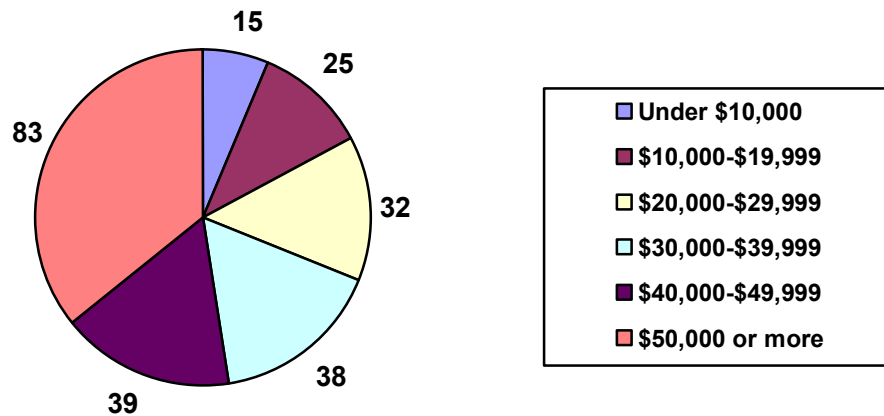
Parental Income

One hundred seventy-one parents reported both household income and the number of hours they worked each week. Of these, 135 parents worked at least 40 hours per week. The respondents categorized their household annual income in \$5,000 increments, which were converted into these \$10,000 increments: Under \$10,000; \$10,000-\$19,999; \$20,000-\$29,999; \$30,000-\$39,999; \$40,000-\$49,999; and \$50,000 or more. Reported income was below \$10,000 for 4 parents (3.3%); between \$10,000 and \$19,999 for 13 parents (10.8%); between \$20,000 and \$29,999 for 13 parents (10.8%); between \$30,000 and \$39,999 for 24 parents (20.0%); between \$40,000 and \$49,999 for 15 parents (12.5%); and \$50,000 or more for 51 parents (42.5%). The resulting median income category was the income range of \$40,000-\$49,999. Annual household income for the families in which the respondent worked at least 40 hours per week is presented in Figure 3.



When including all 232 respondents who reported household income, regardless of the number of hours they themselves worked, percentages of families in each income category remained similar, with slightly higher percentages in the lowest income category (6.5% in the category of under \$10,000) and slightly lower percentages in the category of \$50,000 or more (35.8%). The median income remained in the range of \$40,000-\$49,999 for the total sample. These similarities can be seen by comparing Figure 3 with Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Annual Household Income of All Responding Parents
(n=232)**



Respondents also indicated whether they worry about making ends meet, with possible responses of *no*, *yes*, and *somewhat*. Of 232 parents who responded, 50 (21.6%) stated that they do worry about making ends meet, while 74 (31.9%) considered this somewhat of a concern.

Child Assessment Comparisons by Household Income

Child assessments were also completed as part of the HB1519 evaluation, using the following standardized measures:

- *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Third Edition (PPVT-III)* to assess receptive language;
- *Woodcock-Johnson III (WJ-III)* –
 - *Letter Word Identification* to assess literacy skills;
 - *Applied Problems* to assess mathematical skills;
- *Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)* –
 - *Parent Rating of Social Skills* to assess social skills from the parent perspective;
 - *Parent Rating of Problem Behaviors* to assess problematic behavior from the parent perspective;
 - *Teacher Rating of Social Skills* to assess social skills from the teacher perspective; and
 - *Teacher Rating of Problem Behaviors* to assess problematic behavior from the teacher perspective.

Comparisons were made regarding these assessment scores based on the annual household income reported by the parent.

Statistical differences in child scores appeared on the *PPVT-III* and *Parent Rating of Problem Behavior*, based on household income.¹ In addition, the differences in *Letter-Word Identification* and *Applied Problems* scores approached statistical significance. With regard to the receptive language assessment (*PPVT-III*), on average, children scored below the norm of 100.0 in the families with annual household income below \$20,000 and above the norm in families with income of at least \$20,000. The same trend was seen in the assessment of literacy skills and math skills by the *WJ-III* instruments and the parent assessment of social skills, although those findings were not statistically significant. In the parent assessment of problem behaviors, the reverse is desired, with scores over 100.0 indicating higher than average incidence of problematic behavior. Similar to the other assessments, child scores were statistically better (under 100.0), on average, in families with household income of at least \$20,000. Small to medium effect sizes ranged from $\eta^2 = .04$ to $\eta^2 = .09$, suggesting a modest to moderate association between household income and child assessment scores. Table 9 presents the mean child assessment Standard Scores by category of household income.

Table 9.

Comparison of Child Assessment Scores by Household Income

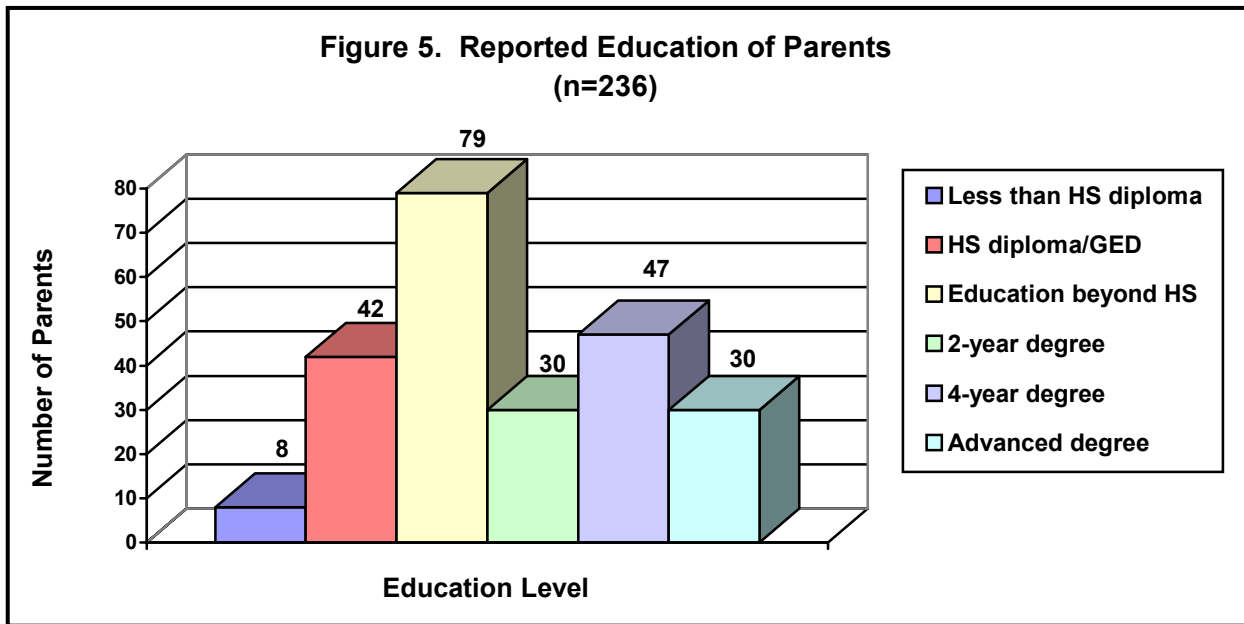
Assessment	Household Income						Significance and Effect Size ^a
	< \$10,000 (n)	\$10,000- \$19,999 (n)	\$20,000- \$29,999 (n)	\$30,000- \$39,999 (n)	\$40,000- \$49,999 (n)	≥ \$50,000 (n)	
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III ^b (n=230)	96.07 (14)	98.42 (24)	103.19 (32)	104.03 (38)	106.72 (39)	106.98 (83)	$F(5,224)=3.87$ $p=.002$ $\eta^2=.08$
WJ Letter-Word Identification ^b (n=231)	99.53 (15)	99.87 (24)	103.88 (32)	102.37 (38)	102.79 (39)	106.82 (83)	$p=.073$ $\eta^2=.04$
WJ Applied Problems ^b (n=231)	95.67 (15)	98.87 (24)	101.47 (32)	103.53 (38)	105.97 (39)	105.02 (83)	$p=.063$ $\eta^2=.05$
^a Noted when $p < .05$ ^b Standardized at 100.00, with scores at 100.00 or above desired ^c Standardized at 100.00, with scores at 100.00 or below desired							

¹ Throughout this discussion, p values of less than .05 are considered statistically significant. η^2 is used as a measure of effect size. While statistical significance indicates the low likelihood of a relationship being due to random error, effect size indicates the strength of the relationship and the proportion of variance associated with the factor in question (Carver, 1984). Cohen (1977) qualitatively judges an η^2 of .06 as a medium effect, with an η^2 of .14 as a large effect size. While this is an arbitrary judgment, this criterion is applied throughout this evaluation.

Assessment	Household Income						Significance and Effect Size ^a
	< \$10,000 (n)	\$10,000- \$19,999 (n)	\$20,000- \$29,999 (n)	\$30,000- \$39,999 (n)	\$40,000- \$49,999 (n)	≥ \$50,000 (n)	
Parent Rating of Social Skills ^b (n=226)	98.50 (14)	99.72 (25)	102.00 (32)	102.11 (36)	105.66 (38)	104.73 (81)	p=.27 eta ² =.03
Parent Rating of Problem Behaviors ^c (n=228)	100.40 (15)	104.08 (25)	93.91 (32)	97.08 (37)	99.58 (38)	93.20 (81)	F(5,222)=4.53 p=.001 eta ² =.09
Teacher Rating of Social Skills ^b (n=208)	107.38 (13)	103.68 (25)	103.33 (30)	106.30 (33)	112.52 (33)	107.20 (74)	p=.12 eta ² =.04
Teacher Rating of Problem Behavior ^c (n=209)	95.79 (14)	101.64 (25)	101.00 (30)	100.10 (31)	94.64 (33)	97.68 (76)	p=.20 eta ² =.03
^a Noted when p<.05 ^b Standardized at 100.00, with scores at 100.00 or above desired ^c Standardized at 100.00, with scores at 100.00 or below desired							

Parent Education

Two hundred thirty-six parents reported their highest level of education. Eight parents (3.0%) did not complete high school, 42 (17.8%) earned a high school diploma or GED, 79 (33.1%) received some additional training/education beyond high school (without a degree). Thirty parents (12.7%) earned a 2-year degree, 47 (20.7%) earned a 4-year degree, and 30 (12.7%) reportedly earned an advanced degree. Figure 5 summarizes information about the highest level of education completed by respondents.



Child Assessment Comparisons by Parent Education

Similar to the comparisons made between household income of families and the child assessment scores, comparisons were made based on the education level of the responding parent. Statistical differences appeared on the *PPVT-III*, *Letter-Word Identification*, *Applied Problems*, and *Teacher Rating of Social Skills*. As one might expect, increased parent education generally corresponded with improved scores. Generally children of parents with less than a high school education received scores near 90, while children of parents with high school diplomas scored near 100, and children of parents with college degrees scored over 105 (standardized norms of 100 for each instrument). The moderate to large effect sizes ($\eta^2 = .05$ to $.17$) on these assessments suggests that a moderately large proportion of the variance may be associated with parent education. Table 10 displays the mean scores on the standardized measures by parent education category.

Table 10.

Comparison of Child Assessment Scores by Parent Education

Assessment	Level of Education						Significance and Effect Size ^a
	Less than a High School Diploma (n)	High School Diploma or GED (n)	Some Post-High School Education (n)	2-Year Degree (n)	4-Year Degree (n)	Advanced Degree (n)	
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III ^b (n=234)	87.88 (8)	101.36 (42)	102.05 (78)	107.17 (29)	108.91 (47)	111.60 (30)	$F(5,228)=9.33$ $p<.001$ $\eta^2=.17$
WJ Letter-Word Identification ^b (n=235)	89.50 (8)	103.05 (42)	102.40 (78)	105.90 (30)	106.57 (47)	107.33 (30)	$F(5,229)=3.79$ $p=.003$ $\eta^2=.08$
WJ Applied Problems ^b (n=235)	93.50 (8)	101.62 (42)	102.28 (78)	105.30 (30)	103.77 (47)	109.23 (30)	$F(5,229)=2.29$ $p=.047$ $\eta^2=.05$
Parent Rating of Social Skills ^b (n=230)	101.25 (8)	98.24 (41)	103.68 (76)	104.41 (29)	103.55 (47)	107.41 (29)	$p=.10$ $\eta^2=.04$
Parent Rating of Problem Behaviors ^c (n=232)	104.50 (8)	99.76 (42)	96.19 (77)	96.76 (29)	94.68 (47)	94.24 (29)	$p=.13$ $\eta^2=.04$
Teacher Rating of Social Skills ^b (n=211)	93.33 (6)	106.39 (36)	106.76 (75)	105.07 (27)	111.93 (45)	105.91 (22)	$F(5,205)=2.45$ $p=.035$ $\eta^2=.06$
Teacher Rating of Problem Behavior ^c (n=212)	101.00 (6)	99.30 (37)	97.81 (73)	98.26 (27)	95.96 (46)	103.65 (23)	$p=.29$ $\eta^2=.03$
^a Noted when $p<.05$ ^b Standardized at 100.00, with scores at 100.00 or above desired ^c Standardized at 100.00, with scores at 100.00 or below desired							

Summary

On average, children were almost 2 years old when they participated in their first early childhood experience outside the home. Over 60% of the parents located child care programs themselves or through referrals from friends and relatives. The majority of parents whose children were enrolled in Missouri Preschool Project programs considered issues of child care cost, availability, choice, and convenience to be satisfactorily addressed.

Some of the most important factors parents considered in selecting early childhood programs were whether the provider had a good reputation, whether the environment was enriching, and whether the teachers were warm and nurturing. Parents generally believed that programs should have at least some responsibility for teaching children letters and numbers, cooperation, self-confidence, and communication skills.

Program costs averaged approximately \$1.35 per hour for children enrolled full-time and \$1.13 per hour for children enrolled less than 35 hours (\$1.53 and \$1.69 per hour, respectively, when excluding non-paying families). About 20% of parents received some assistance outside of the household to help pay their child's tuition, with approximately half of these families relying on government subsidies.

Parents typically gave high ratings of features in the Missouri Preschool Project programs, especially child safety, respectful treatment of children, child familiarity with the environment, quality of experience, and acceptable television access. More than 85% of parents gave the program an *A* or *A+* rating.

Parents identified how frequently they participated in various activities with their child. Over 75% of the parents acknowledged doing these activities with their child at least three times in the past week: listening to music; playing with toys or games indoors; reading a book; taking their child on errands; and participating in outdoor exercise, games, or sports.

Over 90% of the responding parents considered their pre-kindergarten child to be healthy. In addition, over 95% reported having a primary health care provider and health insurance for their child.

On average, two adults and two children lived in the households of the respondents. Approximately 15% of the children whose parents responded had developmental disabilities or special needs.

Families had median annual household income in the range of \$40,000-\$49,999. Children in the families with annual income below \$20,000 scored statistically lower on the receptive language assessment (*PPVT-III*). Parent ratings of problematic behavior were also statistically higher for children with family income below \$20,000.

Almost 80% of responding parents had received some education beyond high school. In comparing the children's assessment scores based on parent education, statistically significant

differences were seen in child scores. Generally children received higher scores on receptive language, literacy, and math when their parent had more education.

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